

ISDA REGIONAL/LOCAL AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

While agriculture is a very visible part of the fabric of Indiana and employs over 15% of the state's workforce, the industry has had less economic development focus than other sectors of the economy. The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) is launching a new initiative to assist Indiana communities to capitalize on agriculture as a part of their economic development.

ISDA values the role of local authority and understands that much of what drives economic development are the policies, strategies, and actions that take place at the regional and local level. ISDA contends that agriculture will be a significant component of Indiana's economic comeback and that this sector needs to be considered within the broader context of economic development.

Plan of Action

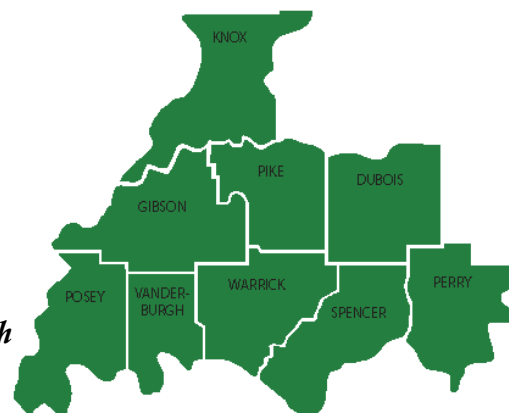
The plan of action is designed to foster strategic relationships between economic development and agriculture. This initiative is designed to reach all 92 Indiana counties over the next four years to help them create economic development strategies for their area. ISDA also will support county/regional efforts to develop land use policies as part of these plans.

ISDA is providing regions and counties with the assistance of a consulting team to identify priorities for agriculture, develop action steps to achieve those priorities and integrate these plans into overall economic development efforts. The county/regional teams will implement and refine the plans on their own. The approach will emphasize involvement of local economic development organizations (LEDO) and the presence of a strong regional approach to action planning.

This effort is being piloted in Region 11 over the course of six months, after which ISDA plans to take the initiative statewide. The pilot counties

will begin developing and implementing action plans to grow the agricultural sector of their economy.

***Dubois
Gibson
Knox
Perry
Pike
Posey
Spencer
Vanderburgh
Warrick***



Stakeholder Engagement

In order to capture input from stakeholders in both economic development and agriculture in Indiana, this initiative will include three levels of engagement.

1) Statewide Advisory Task Force

ISDA is convening a statewide advisory task force to provide guidance and identify resources to help successfully introduce this initiative. The task force includes statewide organizations representing economic development, agriculture, planning, natural resources, and other interests that affect development in Indiana. The goal of the task force is to brainstorm ways to integrate agriculture and economic development, as well as identify ways statewide organizations can help build stakeholder support for the initiative.

2) Regional Action Planning

The consulting team will work with each county-level LEDO to identify and engage local action teams. The local teams will then be asked to appoint representatives (5-7) to be part of the regional action planning efforts. Ideally, representatives from economic development, agriculture, Purdue Extension, and elected public officials will comprise each county's team working at the regional level.

Early in the process these regional sessions will focus on communicating information about the process itself. In later meetings, expertise related to areas such as hardwoods, bioenergy, pork production diversity, food processing, and other relevant subject matters will be delivered in these regional settings.

The regional action planning sessions will also help to build multi-jurisdictional relationships and identify opportunities that cross political boundaries.

3) County Action Planning

While much of the planning for this initiative will take place at the regional level, some local effort will also be needed to address planning, zoning, and other county issues. The county action planning teams will serve to inform and educate the broader local group of the regional planning efforts and to identify the local actions needed.

The consulting team will provide for each county action planning team a set of tools and guidelines to assist them as they do their work. Great effort will be made to ensure that the process is designed so that county teams will have the ability to develop and achieve actions of their own choosing. The tools will also be designed so that local progress and results can be benchmarked against ISDA's statewide goals.

Summary

The initiative will bring together non-traditional partners at the local, regional and state levels for the benefit of Indiana's economy. This initiative is core component of ISDA's strategic plan to grow Indiana's food and agricultural sector, with a focus on hardwoods, bioenergy, regulatory coordination, pork and diversity of production. More importantly, the initiative allows stakeholders to benefit local economies in Indiana by growing the strong economic assets of agriculture found in each community.

Agriculture Initiative Benefits

This agriculture economic development initiative provides benefits to the public and private sector, as well as all engaged stakeholders.

Provides framework for engagement from multiple levels

Capitalizes on agriculture's economic multiplier impact to grow Indiana's economy

Integrates agriculture into economic development strategies

Fosters regional relationships amongst counties

Helps counties draft economic development plans

Provides tools for regions and counties to tailor-make their own strategy

Gives framework for counties to develop land use policies

Helps leverage the power of local authority in developing strategic economic development plans

Positions Indiana to be on cutting edge of non-traditional economic partnerships

